PRESIDENT OBAMA WINS THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

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WASHINGTON–While Russia's president congratulated U.S. President Barack Obama for winning the Nobel Peace Prize, Republicans see the award as so outrageous that they're using it to raise campaign money.
Obama won the prize "for awesomeness," says the mocking Republican fundraising letter. Obama's honour shows "how meaningless a once honourable and respected award has become," says the letter, signed by Michael S. Steele, chairman of the Republican National Committee.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev had a different view. He said the award will encourage further U.S.-Russian cooperation.

"I hope this decision would serve as an additional incentive for our common work to form a new climate in world politics and promote initiatives which are fundamentally important for global security," Medvedev wrote in a letter to Obama.

Steele said Obama hasn't accomplished enough to deserve the prize. Numerous Democrats and independents have expressed similar views, although generally in less bombastic terms.

Asking for contributions to the Republican National Committee of $25 to $1,000, Steele wrote that "the Democrats and their international leftist allies want America made subservient to the agenda of global redistribution and control. And truly patriotic Americans like you and our Republican Party are the only thing standing in their way."

Former Cuban leader Fidel Castro called the Nobel award a "positive step," although he said it was more a repudiation of former president George W. Bush than a recognition of anything concrete Obama has done.

South Africa's president, Jacob Zuma, cited a Zulu term – "Ubuntu," which refers to the importance of community – in saying Obama's "leadership reflects the true spirit of Ubuntu because your approach celebrates our common humanity."

Nobel Prize puts pressure on Barack Obama and Israel
The Toronto Star, 11 October 2009
By Haroon Siddiqui

The Nobel Peace Prize was always political, in the positive sense. The awards to Desmond Tutu, Yitzhak Rabin/Yasser Arafat, José Ramos-Horta of East Timor, Shirin Ebadi of Iran, etc. were meant

to advance peace and other causes.

Barack Obama's efforts at dragging America back into multilateralism, rebuilding bridges to the Arab/Muslim world, looking for a light at the end of the Afghan tunnel, trying for peace in the Middle East, etc. can use the Nobel to overcome his detractors. No wonder they are being so bilious.

Being honoured for defending the rule of law should also help him ease the U.S. from protecting Israel despite its flouting of international norms.

Take the recent Richard Goldstone report that said Israel and Hamas committed war crimes in Gaza. Instead of heeding his findings, Israel and the U.S. have been slinging mud at the highly respected South African jurist and former prosecutor of war crimes in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, who also happens to be a committed Zionist.

The smear job was followed by American strong-arm tactics to derail his report from the UN Human Rights Council, the Geneva-based body that had commissioned it. Mahmoud Abbas was pressured into spearheading a postponement until March.

But the report won't go away. It has been forced onto the agenda of the Security Council for Wednesday by Libya, the only Arab state currently on the 15-member body. Even if the initiative had come from a respectable member, the outcome probably would still be the same: a U.S. veto against any meaningful action.

But post-Nobel, such a vote would be embarrassing for Obama (he has already backed off his earlier call for Israel to freeze illegal Jewish settlements). And his grand declarations of building bridges to the Muslim world would begin to sound hollow.

Even before the announcement of the Nobel award, it was clear that Israeli-American actions have been counterproductive.

Abbas has faced a storm of protests from Palestinians for falling for Benjamin Netanyahu's bluff that debating Gladstone's findings would, somehow, derail the peace process (which, in fact, hasn't existed for 10 months).

Hamas is strengthened, and thus Iran. Libya is getting good press.

All this was eminently predictable. So why are Israel and the U.S. shooting themselves in the foot?

While there have been several reports about possible war crimes in Gaza – by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Israeli groups B'Tselem and Breaking the Silence – Goldstone's carried his moral and judicial authority. "This messenger is propaganda-proof," as columnist Gideon Levy of the Israeli daily Haaretz said.

Goldstone also accused Hamas of indiscriminate rocket fire at Israeli civilians but he pronounced Israel guilty of deliberately targeting civilians, destroying thousands of homes, hundreds of factories and farms, hospitals and mosques and preventing humanitarian aid from reaching the wounded.

He urged both sides to initiate their own investigations into the war crimes – (he dismissed Israel's 100 or so internal probes as "pusillanimous") – and report back to the Security Council in six months. Failing that, he wanted the matter turned over to the International Criminal Court.

All this raised the prospect of some top Israelis, and even Americans, facing arrests abroad, a la Augusto Pinochet in London in 1998.

Meanwhile, Goldstone has stood firm, saying that all the answers to the "barrage of criticism" directed at him can be found in his report.

His daughter, Nicole, who lives in Toronto, reportedly told Israeli Army Radio in Hebrew: "My father did not expect to see and hear what he saw and heard," adding that the report may have been harsher had it been headed by someone else.

The Goldstone report has divided the Jewish community, with many moving away from ethnic/religious/national solidarity toward fidelity with human rights, international law, truth and justice. Obama should be standing up for that as well.

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